

USE OF PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK

Policies, cultural differences and impact

Maija Saari

International Business
Bachelor's Thesis
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Objectives

The main objectives of this study were to collect different ways of restricting or encouraging the use of personal social media at work, study what kind of impacts different policies and the increased use of social media have on employees, the employer and the workplace, and find out whether there are cultural differences in the perceptions of social media at work.

Summary

This research concentrated on the use of social media at work and how it has been restricted and encouraged and the impacts of it. The research was conducted through a qualitative study of 40 different internet articles. The results were analyzed through categorization. The study found four different types of policies that approach social media at work. These are beneficial policies, monitoring, Bring Your Own Devices and banning. The impacts of personal social media at work to the employer are more visibility online, better communication channels and happier employees. To the employees increased use of social media at work means closer work community and increased job satisfaction, but also technostress, difficulties in concentration and in separating personal and professional lives. Cultural differences were not found from the data collected, but hypothetical conclusions were drawn based on literature, data and Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Conclusions

Social media continues to grow and is nearly impossible to keep out of the workplace. Therefore, companies should initiate social media policies that could benefit both the employer and the employee. However, employees can suffer from multiple negative consequences of the increased use of social media at work, including burnouts and constant interruptions, so the policies should strongly take employees' wellbeing into account.

Key words: Social media, workplace, culture, management, employee wellbeing, work atmosphere, technostress

Language: English

Grade:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Social media has been and continues to be one of the fastest growing innovations in the world. New applications appear constantly and the number of users worldwide continues to grow and expand to new geographical areas. Social media brings people closer to each other regardless of their physical location and it provides a variety of new opportunities for communication and networking. Let us take Facebook, the most popular social media platform in the world, as an example: it reached 2 billion monthly users in July 2017 (Zuckerberg, 2017), which indicates well how important and big part of life social media is for many people nowadays.

This creates pressure to be online constantly. The world of social media is full of information and content, and the stream of new content in an increasing one, so people are at risk of missing something if they log out even for a short while. This becomes significant especially when people should be concentrating on something else, for example their job. The use of personal social media therefore has some effects on people's professional life, their performance at work, relationships with co-workers and the atmosphere of the workplace.

However, the way the employers see the use of personal social media at the workplace can differ. Due to the increasing phenomenon, they have to react in some way, mainly through creating social media policies that restrict or encourage the use. These policies are different and so are their consequences, since they either increase or decrease the amount of time spent online.

1.2 Research Problem

Even though most employers have initiated a social media policy in their company, the impacts of them are still unclear and have not been studied that much. These policies as well as their consequences with the either increased or decreased use of social media, however, affect people both at work and outside of it. There are

impacts of different kind on different stakeholders, for example, the employer and the employee, so weighting the good and bad consequences could lead to important and interesting conclusions and findings. In the global world, it would also be interesting to see if some geographical or cultural factors affect the way people perceive the use of social media at the workplace.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How have employers tried to control or encourage the use of personal social media at work?
2. What have been the effects of these policies and their consequences on employees, the employer and the workplace?
3. Are there cultural differences in the findings of research questions 1 and 2?

1.4 Research Objectives

This thesis aims to:

1. List some of the common policies that employers use to monitor, restrict and encourage their employees' use of personal social media at work.
2. Collect people's opinions on restricting or encouraging the use of social media and the ways it affects their lives.
3. Compare the benefits that companies expect the increased use of social media for work to bring them, to the consequences that it brings to the employees.
4. Find possible cultural differences in the findings related to people's perceptions of using social media at work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to analyze existing literature on the use of social media, especially at the workplace and in different cultures. The first part of the review discusses the history and the fast and constant development of social media, and the reasons for people to start and continue the use of social media. It also addresses the opportunities that social media offers as well as the threats that might rise from the use of it. The second part of the literature review concentrates on the topic of the personal usage of social media on a workplace. It will cover some reasons why employees use personal social media at work and some of the possible positive and negative consequences to the people and the organization of this use. After that, the third part defines national culture, some cultural differences in management styles, in how employees perceive the manager, and how the use of social media varies depending on the culture and location.

2.2 The nature of social media

2.2.1 Development

The evolution of internet has been rapid and social media became a part of it already in the very beginning. “The internet started out as nothing more than a giant Bulletin Board System” is how Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 60) describe the early days of the innovation. The original point was to allow people exchange and share data and messages with each other, which is what we know today as social media.

The term social media itself was taken into use after MySpace launched in 2003 and Facebook in 2004 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Those years were the beginning of the networks and connections that today reach over two billion people all around the world (Statista, 2018; Zuckerberg, 2017). Chan et al. (2016) list other major launches of the 21st century to be YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006, Tumblr in 2007, Pinterest and Instagram in 2010, Snapchat in 2011 and Vine in 2013. From this development,

it can be seen that platforms that allow sharing of pictures and videos have been the biggest trend among the most recent popular applications. In addition, platforms that make it easy and quick to share content in everyday life, such as Snapchat, have started to play a bigger role in the field of social media.

New applications and networks are being born all the time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) which demonstrates well the way social media is expanding and still reaching new areas. Nineteen social media sites have over 200 million active users, Facebook leading with 2.17 billion users, followed by YouTube with 1.5 billion and WhatsApp with 1.3 billion users (Statista, 2018). This means that more than a fourth of the world's population is online on a regular basis so what happens there has an effect on many people. In addition, the amount of time spent online is growing constantly (Brooks, 2013a), so perhaps social media is maybe starting to take too much control in people's lives. Brooks (2013b: 3) found in his research that "many people report being happier after 'unplugging' for the technology", which would support the assumption that people might start to feel like reducing their social media presence.

2.2.2 Purpose and opportunities

Social media consists of different platforms and sites that allow the users to do various things online, for example communicate with friends and strangers (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp), share media content (e.g. Youtube, Instagram) and browse different kind of information and news (blogs, feeds). It can also be a way to spend leisure time and relax (Sun, Rubin & Haridakis, 2008).

Using social media often includes creating a personal profile with some personal information (e.g. Weller, 2016; Warner-Søderholm, Bertsch, Sawe, Lee, Wolfe, Meyer, Engel & Fatilva, 2017) which immediately makes being online more real to the individual. Others can also see some of this information unless the privacy setting say otherwise, so it is immediately letting friends and maybe unknown people closer to the user on a personal level (Strater & Lipford, 2008).

These profiles can, however, be made just the way the individual wants to. The posts and their content are only what the user wants to be seen by others, and does not therefore necessarily tell the whole truth: Cramer, Song & Drent (2016: 740) call Facebook for example “the world of optimized self”. People can transform themselves into a better version of self, and maybe look for belongingness to a network of friends or strangers through that (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Warner-Søderholm et al., 2017). Social media is one sort of an anonymous way of creating a satisfying image of oneself, since no one can never truly know who it is behind some online profile. Posting pictures and posts can result in feedback from other people and that could be wanted when looking for self-disclosure or better self-esteem (Brooks, 2013a).

Social media is all about sharing and different platforms make it possible to share to different audiences. For example, different messenger applications allow conversation between two people or bigger groups, but the information shared is private so that only those parties of the conversation can see it. Posting on a feed of a social media platform produces information that is visible to anyone who has been befriended or who is following, so it is more public (Miller, Costa, Haynes, McDonald, Nicolescu, Sinanan, Spyer, Venkatraman, & Wang, 2016). Commenting on a post has a large audience, too, as unknown people might follow the same content and see what is written there (Cramer et al., 2016; Kuan-Yu & Hsi-Peng, 2011). These features enable a variety of ways to use social media and make it beneficial to have a user profile on many different platforms at the same time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kuan-Yu & Hsi-Peng, 2011).

One of the most important factors of social media is that it allows fast and efficient communication between all kinds of people (Brooks, 2013a). The users have different backgrounds, genders, ages, beliefs and looks, but they are all there in the same virtual world. Especially the international aspect of social media is important, as it is a key player in globalization making it possible to interact with people from different physical locations (Gruzd, Jacobson, Wellman & Mai, 2017; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Most social media platforms are available on many languages, so that does not become a hinder for using the sites (Statista, 2018).

Social media can be also taken to go, since it is nowadays accessible on many different devices such as smartphones, laptops and tablets (Rosen & Samuel, 2015; Brooks, 2013b), which allows the users to stay online wherever they go, and increases the overall time spent online.

Social media is constantly developing which means that new opportunities are born all the time (Weller, 2016). Virtual social worlds and realities, which are platforms that offer their users an alternative universe where to live a simulation of real life, are being improved and as the user base grows, so does the social media network which is becoming just as much of a real world than the offline world (Miller et al., 2016). “Everything is about social media” according to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010: 67) and that truly seems to be the pattern in both personal and professional concepts. More and more content is being transferred to an online form and the information available is comprehensive. Development is a good thing when it is being utilized in a right way, since after all, social media is supposed to “make life easier” for its users (Rosen & Samuel, 2015: n.a.)

2.2.3 Possible threats

With its fast development and growing possibilities there has to be some threats, too, considering social media. First of all, creating profiles that are the perfected version of the person behind them can lead to people not being themselves even in real life, and the pressure of being good enough online can reduce overall well-being (Brooks, 2013a). Picture-perfect profiles also lead to comparing oneself with others, which can have serious emotional and self-confidence related problems. Cramer et al. (2016) conducted a study on this topic and the results showed that 69 % of the participants admitted on comparing people online. Looking for feedback on pictures and posts can lower self-esteem if the comments are negative and disruptive, or something other than what was wanted (Brooks, 2013a).

The time spent online can also be time wasted, since people tend to be online even when they should be doing something more important (Brooks, 2013b; Rosen & Samuel, 2015). There is so much information available, that first of all not everything

is true anymore like fake news (Warner-Söderholm et al., 2017), but it is also possible to get lost in there and spend hours without actually finding any content that would benefit the user in that particular situation (Rosen & Samuel, 2015). Regarding the fake content, one of the biggest key players in the field of social media, trust, steps in. People share personal information and opinions, but the audience can be strangers who might do whatever they want with it. What is once online will stay there for good, so there is a certain trustworthiness in other people in everything posted online (Warner-Söderholm et al., 2017). In addition, that trust can be easily violated, which creates a big threat to the whole phenomenon of social media, which is largely built on it.

Social media dependency is also a term that qualifies as a threat (Sun et al., 2008). People spend so much time online that they cannot afford “turning off” (Rosen & Samuel, 2015: n.a.), which creates a pressure to stay up to date all the time. The dependency can have roots in fear of missing out on the things that happen, since people want to see the newest news and content before or at the same time as everyone else (ibid). This creates stress and can harm concentration and task performance (Brooks, 2013b).

Social media is also maybe becoming somewhat too big. With connection online all around the world, the things happening right where people are physically can lose value. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 67) picture how this kind of intense use and growth of social media can “foster a society where we don’t know the names of our own next-door neighbors” because we are too keen on what is going on with a friend on the other side of the planet.

2.3 The personal use of social media in the workplace

Social media allows people to be online in both work and home at the same time (Brooks, 2013a; Rosen & Samuel, 2015) and people bring their personal social media with them to work and check different platforms multiple times during a workday. According to a poll created by ComPsych 88 % of the employees who answered said they checked their social media at least once during working time

(Hudson, 2017). It is worth studying further since the time spent online might have effects on employees' productivity, engagement and other work-related aspects.

2.3.1 Reasons to use personal social media at work

As social media has grown and grown during the past few years, it has effects on both personal and professional life. It is often seen that at work concentration should be on the work itself, but people still tend to bring their personal social media use with them to the office (e.g. van Zoonen & Rice, 2017; Moqbel, Nevo & Kock, 2013; Lim, 2002). In order to analyze the consequences of such action, it is important to look into the reasons behind it first. Many researchers of the field suggest in their studies that the purpose is to keep in touch with home life. As social media is a quick way to maintain relationships, it offers a way to balance the personal and professional lives and not be forced to choose one over the other even for a short moment (Moqbel et al., 2013; Kühnel, Vahle-Hinz, De Bloom & Syrek, 2017).

People might also use personal social media at work to not miss out on anything. New content is downloaded all the time, so people want to stay up to date even when they are busy at work. They might also feel obligated to respond quickly (van Zoonen & Rice, 2017), so being online might seem as crucial in order to keep up with the latest news and trends.

However, some researchers also found that people turn to social media websites when they feel their work is too intense (van Zoonen & Rice, 2017) or even if they feel trapped in a wrong kind of job (Choon Yeong Ng, Yu Ting Shao & Liu 2016). Findings also suggest that employees use personal social media as a way to take a break from work and reload energy levels (Syrek, Kühnel, Vahle-Hinz & De Bloom, 2017). One form of this is to use social media as a source of entertainment in the middle of a working day (Choon Yeong Ng et al., 2016).

2.3.2 Positive consequences of using personal social media at work

Social media as a phenomenon has brought many good things and new ways of communication, so it is interesting to see what kind of positive aspects it has opened in the workplace, regarding especially the use of personal social media. One of these is the fact that employees can stay in touch with contacts outside the workplace and with their co-workers, which leads to less stress over possible conflicts between professional and personal lives and therefore a more relaxed mood (Kühnel et al, 2017). This leads to a positive outcome for the organization, as “happy workers work better” according to Moqbel et al. (2013: 254).

This would suggest that using private social media brings happiness and through that increases the motivation of the employee. Some researchers agree with this and they have found evidence that using social media indeed improves the motivation and work engagement of an employee (Syrek et al., 2017; Charoensukmongkol, 2014). For example, turning to social media in order to take a break leads to energy levels turning back up, which makes working nicer again (Syrek et al., 2017).

The work engagement leads to job satisfaction and emotional attachment to the organization, which leads to better work results (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Moqbel et al., 2013). Therefore, perhaps allowing the employees to use their personal social media at work helps them to balance stress and the different aspects of their life, which leaves more room for concentrating on work and getting good results.

2.3.3 Negative consequences of using personal social media at work

On the contrary, people also tend to perceive personal social media use at work as a distraction. Using working time on being online and being concerned with outside work businesses throughout the workday can harm motivation and result in lower productivity and performance (Syrek et al., 2017; Andreassen, Torsheim & Pallesen, 2014; Brooks, 2013a). Especially if social media is used to seek entertainment, research shows that cognitive capacity is not working at its full potential regarding work (Choon Yeong Ng et al., 2016) and that can be seen in quality of work. One

study also shows that the more people use personal social media during a workday the more their creativity suffers and that, in some jobs, can damage the performance and results (Kühnel et al., 2017).

Social media can also create stress to employees. When studying the relationship between private social media use and burnouts, Charoensukmongkol (2016) found that one of the factors of burnout, emotional exhaustion, was especially affected by the amount of time spent online in a way that more time resulted in more emotional exhaustion. This would suggest that even though personal social media use can reduce stress related to imbalance between work and non-work lives (Kühnel et al., 2017), it at the same time creates an emotional pressure to be online and work on these both worlds at the same time, which can be exhaustive.

The intense use of social media at work can also work as a warning sign, since studies show that it may be a consequence of not enjoying the work (Choon Yeong Ng et al., 2016) or feeling like the job is too intense or unpredictable which can create stress (van Zoonen & Rice, 2017). These both are factors that could lead to the employee wanting to quit their job, so it is something that the management should be aware of. Employees might also think that being online is something that does no harm, leads to no negative consequences and can easily “be overlooked” which makes it easier to turn to it whenever an employee feels like it (Lim, 2002: 691).

2.4 International differences culture, management and use of social media

2.4.1 Definitions of national culture

“Culture is a broad umbrella term,” describes Bouckaert (2007: 29) meaning that for one word, culture covers many complicated and complex aspects of people. He describes culture as a circle of values, attitudes and behaviour that affect each other and create culture, which again creates values and so on. Crossland & Hambrick (2007) also define culture as the norms and values that have an effect on the behaviour and customs of people. It creates and is affected by beliefs and principles (Bouckaert, 2007) and is a part of all people in some form.

Regarding this thesis, national culture is the form of culture that will be looked into more closely and the effect of which will be studied. When speaking of the definition of national culture, the most used theory is the dimension approach of Geert Hofstede. Hofstede (1993: 89) sees culture as the “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another”. He has been doing research on national culture and created first five, later six dimensions of national culture to compare countries and their culture with.

First of the dimensions of Hofstede (1993) is power distance, which describes the equality or inequality in the country, the way power is distributed (flat versus hierarchical) and how people react to these possible inequalities. The second one is individualism versus collectivism, which measures whether the people of a national culture act rather as individuals or as members of a group. The third dimension, masculinity versus femininity, addresses values and whether “tough values like assertiveness, performance, success and competition” or “tender values like the quality of life, maintaining warm personal relationships, service, care for the weak, and solidarity” (Hofstede, 1993: 90) are dominant in the country and its culture. The fourth one is called uncertainty avoidance and it measures the extent to which people prefer familiar and predictable situations to the opposite, unfamiliar and unpredictable. The fifth dimension, called long-term versus short-term orientation, which describes whether people focus and think more about future or the present and past in their decision-making. Later to this publication a sixth dimension was added, indulgence, and it measures how much people show outside their desires to enjoy life and have fun, or how much it is regulated (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

Hofstede’s dimensions do not tell an absolute truth and Jago (2017) alongside many others agrees with this. He points out that the country specific national culture scores in the dimensions indeed describe the situation at the country level, not the individual level, which also affects a certain person’s behaviour and values. Jago (2017: 645) warns that Hofstede’s dimensions are not only most used but also as one of “the most misinterpreted” one as the dimensions are presented the way Hofstede chose to discuss his findings, and people have mistaken them for being solely facts or used them on an individual level.

However, many authors, for example Krieg, Ma & Robinson (2018) and Crossland & Hambrick (2007), use Hofstede's dimensions in their studies related to national differences in management, so it is important to know their meaning and what they on the country level may tell about a certain nation. In addition to focusing on national differences, Jago (2017: 649) points out that even though they are important, "similarities across countries are more important". So when approaching the topic of this thesis from a cultural point of view, both similarities and differences between nations are discussed.

2.4.2 Management perceptions in different cultures

Management can be defined as someone having authority over a group of people and the goal of their actions. The important aspects of it are motivating people, influencing people in a way that they fulfill certain tasks and reach the group's goals (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010). However, the way management is seen and executed differs not only between organizations but also between cultures and countries (Chong, 2013; Capatîna & Schin, 2013; Gerhart & Fang, 2005). Depending on the dominant national culture, different competencies might be expected in order to be a good manager (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010; Chong, 2013). Gerhart & Fang (2005) point out that these differences are not a bad thing, on the contrary, they might create management styles that are unique and effective.

There are so many national cultures in the world that categorizing them into larger groups is hard without too much generalization. Using Hofstede's dimensions, some authors have managed to draw some conclusions in general that link some dimensions into certain aspects of management. Crossland & Hambrick (2011) found that in countries with higher uncertainty avoidance, managers are more likely to have more influence in the company. In individualistic cultures, managers have close relationships to the employees, whereas in countries with high power distance close relationships are mainly formed with people on the same hierarchical level in the company (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010).

However, mainly research has been focusing on a certain country and its cultural effects on management. Therefore, in order to understand the differences more concretely that national culture might create, it is important to look also at literature that studies management on a country level.

2.4.2.1 Country specific examples on manager perceptions

Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian (2010: 100) describe in detail the various manager types and expectations that Europe has, but point out Sweden as having “the most unique management style” of the continent. Swedish managers are able to make fast decisions and adapt to new situations. They are innovative and ask for the opinions and ideas of the employees, and value good personal relationships.

In France, managers have a complete decision making power (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010). They are seen as authorities who are not afraid to be direct with their questions and directions (Capatîna & Schin, 2013), and want to be reported about everything that they are aware of what is going on. They are strict and expect to be treated respectively as in France there is a clear sense of a hierarchy (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010).

German managers are distant to their subordinates and do not tend to form personal relationships (Capatîna & Schin, 2013; Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010). They are expected to simply assign tasks and solve problems if the employees happen to encounter some (Hofstede, 1993). Dutch managers are also independent and do not ask the opinions of others, but they participate in the day-to-day activities and consult their subordinates when needed (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010).

In the United States, the manager is an influential character with much power over both the employees and the direction in which the organization flows to (Crossland & Hambrick, 2007; 2011). Employees want to have a good relationship with their managers (Hofstede, 1993), but in the end managers are expected to show gratitude and promote people who are hardworking and show results (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010).

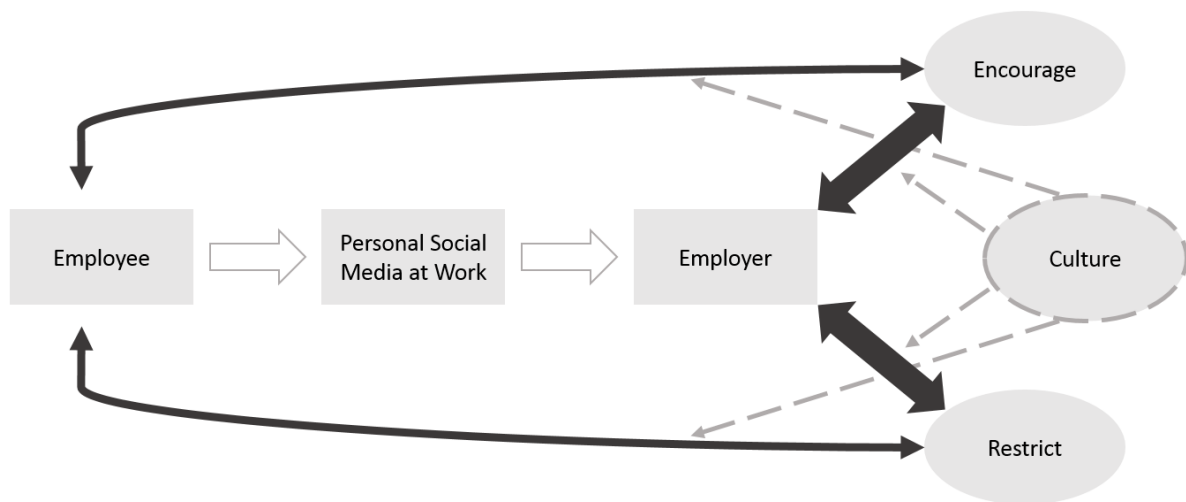
Japan is one of the most researched country in regard to leadership and management in its national culture. In Japan, people value life-long employment and commitment to one organization (Hofstede, 1993; Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010; Krieg, Ma & Robinson, 2018). Japan is scores high on collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (Crossland & Hambrick, 2007) which shows at the workplace as people work in groups often and managers supervise employees as teams instead of individuals (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010). Power distance in Japan is also relatively high, so relationships within an organization “are initiated from the top-down” (Krieg, Ma & Robinson, 2018) instead of employees being easily able to approach their manager as a friend.

2.4.3 Differences in the use of social media internationally

As social media is dependent on having an internet connection and a device to access the platforms with, location and the amount of development in the country has an effect in how many of its population use social media. Newzoo (2017) lists countries by the percentage of population that owns a smartphone and have access to social media. Western European countries, North American countries and for example United Arab Emirates ranks the highest with over 60 % of the populations owning a smartphone. On the other end of the list are countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria and Iraq, with less than 20 % of the population using smartphones: the percentage of Bangladesh is only 5.2 %. Poushter (2016) found similar results with South Korea in the lead with 88 % of adult population owned a smartphone, followed by Australia, Israel, the United States and Spain. In his findings Uganda and Ethiopia had the least smartphone users with only 4 % of adult population each.

In some countries, for example China, the government also sets strict regulations and censorship laws on content available via social media (Lieu, 2017). This also has an effect on the use of social media as it might affect the number of platforms accessible in a certain country and therefore the amount spent online. Facebook, for example, has been blocked from China since 2009 according to Lieu (2017).

2.5 Conceptual framework



This conceptual framework describes the main connections related to the topic of personal social media use at work and how the employer restricts or encourages it. The white arrows describe the topics covered in the literature reviewed, which include the impacts of using personal social media at work to the employee, the employer and the reasons for the use. The dark arrows represent the aspects of the issue that will be studied through the data collected. Those are whether the employee chooses to restrict or encourage the use of social media and how, and what are the consequences to the employer of whichever policy they choose. The research will also cover the impacts of social media policies on employees and the possible consequences to them outside work. The dotted lines represent the possible cultural differences that the findings of this study might have according to the data available.

2.6 Conclusion

Social media phenomenon is growing constantly with new platforms and applications. It has become a big part of people's lives and the amount of time spent online is more than ever, including during a workday. Personal social media use has both good and bad effects when used at work and multiple researchers have called it a

“double-edged sword” (Choon Yeong Ng et al., 2016: 475; Charoensukmongkol, 2016: 1977).

This literature review found that these effects impact both the employer and the employees through for example productivity, work engagement and happiness. They affect both at the workplace and also outside of it in the free time of the employees, so the approach to social media that the employer chooses makes a difference. From the literature some cultural differences in management styles and use of smart phones were also found. However, the relationship between these differences and different kinds of social media policies at work is a global and contemporary topic that has not yet been studied.

Little research exists about the various ways in which employers have reacted to the growing use of social media. Different types of social media policies’ impacts on the companies, their employees and the workplace are a topic with a lot of room for further studies. Some of such policies restrict and some encourage the use of social media at work, so the impacts can be very different and interesting.

Research has not touched the topic of whether or not culture affects these policies or their impacts either. Miller et al. (2016) discuss how the content posted in social media platforms differs in different cultures also when used in a workplace, but they do not touch the topic of how people react to social media at work. However, national culture does affect the workplace in other ways, such as how the managers are seen and what is expected of them, so it might also have impact on the way they react to the use of social media at work. Therefore, it is interesting to see whether some clear cultural differences can be found between the social media policies and people’s reactions to their consequences, which can be either increased or decreased the use of social media at the workplace.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

For this thesis, a qualitative research was conducted. Empirical data collected consists of different kinds of internet sources. This kind of data was chosen to be examined because with social media and the internet being a big part of today's society, people tend to express their opinions online more. In order to answer the research questions that largely relate to people's opinions and perceptions it is important to gather information from where people can both anonymously and with their name post their viewpoints and feelings. As a global platform, the internet is also a good source in order to find some cultural differences that were also part of the research questions.

The data collected is listed in the table below (Table 1). A more specific table with the details of each article is in the appendices (Appendix 1: Data). Under each type, the articles are numbered from one onwards so that they are easily referred to in the analysis.

Table 1 Data

Type of article	Amount
Blogpost (B)	5
Comment (C)	6
LinkedIn article (LIA)	1
Magazine article (M)	4
Chat thread (CH)	1
Website article (WA)	23

In total, there are 40 articles of six different types. The approximate length of the website articles and the magazine articles is 900-1300 words, and for blogposts approximately 400-600 words. The rest vary in length, some of the comments are only a couple of sentences whereas the LinkedIn article was nearly 700 words. Therefore, the pool of information sources gathered is wide and has viewpoints of different kinds of people and platforms. The data collected was written both in English and Finnish.

The viewpoint of the writers varies between employers and employees, some articles are also written by lawyers, experts and other professionals of the field who give their insights to the topic of social media at the work place or the way it is restricted or encouraged. The employee point of view is directly given mainly in the comments of the data, since they are written by ordinary people commenting on the issue. Some other writers take a viewpoint of the employee, but those articles are not directly the opinions of employees.

The website articles and the LinkedIn article are mostly written in a professional and serious style, and they aim at guiding mainly the employer in dealing with social media at work. Some take a more informal approach with a chatty style, but they too are still informative and give advice on how to face the phenomenon of social media.

The chat thread and the comments are chatty and emotional, showing the feelings and thoughts of their writers. Some have a frustrated style, either towards social media at work or towards those who have something negative to say about it.

Most of the blogposts have chatty style, too, although some are more professional. All of them have some informative characteristics but the points are sometimes expressed on a more jokey matter than for example in the website articles.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis started by grouping the articles according to the themes that they discussed. The categories are divided by a certain way of restricting or encouraging the use of social media and the impacts of that specific way. Some articles might belong to more than one category since they discuss multiple ones of these ways or their impacts. After the different policies, a fifth category contains articles about people's general reactions to the increased use of social media at the workplace and the effects it has created. A sixth section of the findings concentrates on cultural differences in both the restriction and encouragement types and the overall phenomenon of social media at work.

This kind of categorization was chosen because while social media has effects on all companies and organization, the way of restricting or encouraging its use differs. The four first categories put together similar kind of policies and their impacts on the employer and the employees, through which the answers to research question 1 are clearly separated already in the headings of the categories. That way the effects of the ways of encouraging and restricting the use of social media are also separated from each other to answer research question 2. The fifth category also answers to the second research question and digs deeper than only the direct impacts that different policies might have. The sixth category gives answers to the third research question by looking into the cultural differences.

Under each category, the articles are grouped again in a table form. It shows which articles are in favor of and which are against social media at work both in general and regarding the kind of policy that the category in question discusses. This gives an overview of the data researched for that topic and shows the overall attitude towards the issue is discussed.

4.1 Employee and employer beneficial policies and their direct impacts

The first and biggest category contains articles that discuss implementing a social media policy that encourages the use of social media and benefits both the employer and the employee. A typical article for this theme discusses how a social media policy should be built to avoid possible misuses that could lead to confidential information leaking through the employees' accounts. They also list the impacts of having such a policy, for example the increased work engagement, bigger audience online and better communication system. Articles of this category are WA1-4, WA6-8, WA10-12, WA17-18, WA20-21, B1, B3, B5 and LIA1.

Table 2 Data for employee and employer beneficial policies and their direct impact

Article	Personal social media at work		Having a beneficial policy	
	Positive effects	Negative effects	In favor of a detailed policy	In favor of a guiding policy
WA1	X			X
WA2	X			X
WA3	X	X		X
WA4		X	X	
WA6		X		X
WA7	X			X
WA8		X		X
WA10	X			X
WA11		X	X	
WA12	X			X
WA17	X		X	
WA18	X	X	X	
WA20	X	X	X	
WA21	X			X
B1	X			X
B3		X	X	
B5	X			X
LIA1		X		X

In Table 2, it can be seen that the articles used in this category discuss both the benefits and downsides of having social media at work. Despite the opinion on whether social media brings good or bad things to the workplace, all the articles suggested on having some kind of policy or platform to guide employees' use of social media at work, since they thought that the phenomenon cannot be completely neglected or banned. The two main ways of implementing a social media policy are a detailed and strict policy and a policy that gives employees guidelines for the use of social media.

Many of the articles collected encourage companies to create a social media policy that aims for maximizing the benefits of social media for both the employer and the employees. The main ways to do this, as listed in for example WA4, B3 and WA17, are defining everything clearly in the policy, maintaining and updating the policy and making sure that all members of staff are aware of it. However, LIA1 points out that while there are "policies regarding e-mail communication and technology use, very few companies have policies that specifically address social media governance and risks". Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the strengths of a policy dedicated especially for social media.

Social media policies are made mainly in the hope that the employer could benefit from the time that employees would no matter spend with personal social media at work. Employees are encouraged to for example share content produced by the company, like their posts and communicate internally through different kinds of social media platforms. This brings some free advertisement to the firm, more visibility for the brand through the employees' social networks and more fluent communication systems according to for example WA6, WA10, WA20 and B1.

One of the most common communication systems is creating an intranet for the company. "This can connect employees directly, allowing them to ask questions and interact, while preventing them from finding out negative aspects about one another, sounding off about the boss or the company, or wasting time watching cat video after cat video — of which I may, on occasion, be guilty," the author of WA7 points out the benefits in a jokey style. An alternative is to initiate the use of for example Facebook for company's events and news so that it is easily approachable for anyone (WA17,

WA1). That can also work as a channel of showing gratitude to employees who have performed well and through that improve job satisfaction. However, moving company related groups and networks to a personal social media platform, such as Facebook, could have its downsides since it means that employees are in contact with the work platform on their free time too. Also, not all employees are active on these platforms nor do they want to be, so using primarily for example Facebook for company related information can be excluding.

Other consequences to the employees are also listed in many of the articles. These include the ability to connect better with co-workers and building a warmer work atmosphere. An example from WA1 would be that employees are able to send “get well soon” wishes for a sick colleague and continue discussions on the same platforms outside working hours. The improved team spirit among employees helps increase the engagement and motivation towards the work, so both the employees and the employer benefit from it. The employees also learn when they are surfing online, so encouraging it gives room for personal improvement and learning. According to B5, “employees that are researching, communicating, and building online networks are some of the most involved, innovative, and progressive-minded people you’ll find. They’re engaging in thoughtful conversations and trending as experts in their industries.”

One of the biggest reasons for these kinds of policies is, however, that with the increased use of social media the companies are at risk with classified information (WA8). Without regulating how employees can use social media there is no guarantee someone could accidentally or on purpose post content or images that could harm the company reputation. Therefore, the firms try to guide the use of social media from the potential harm to their own benefit.

However, social media policies protect not only the employer but the employees’ privacy too (WA2). For example, in the policy, the rights of the employee are usually listed and they include for example that the employer cannot go and fire someone based on something they have read online in the employee’s personal accounts (WA4, WA18). This is important, since otherwise while the employee spends their

working hours online, the employer could be doing the same with severe consequences.

Initiating social media policies is not always enough, since in order to benefit from them the employees should have an incentive to use it in the way the employer wants them to. One of these ways is gamification (WA21, B1). In this context, it means setting up competitions and campaigns to get employees to share and like more of the content produced by the company and be active in commenting on current topics in a professional way. “Companies can set up teams, define scoring metrics, launch challenges, publicize winners and award tangible prizes” according to WA21 in order to engage employees to support and promote the company and brand on social media. While these kinds of activities can be a fun way to do this, it can also harm the atmosphere at the workplace by putting colleagues against each other. That can then lead to decrease in motivation and job satisfaction as well as worse relationships between co-workers, all of which go against the initial employee benefits of encouraging the use social media at work.

Bad atmosphere among co-workers can also lead to more severe things like cyberbullying. All harassment that happens online through some platform is qualified as cyberbullying, and when the use of social media is allowed at the workplace and even encouraged, it increases the risk of this phenomenon growing bigger. “Coworkers may harass or send negative messages to one another and hinder teamwork and collaboration” according to WA6. Different platforms allow different kind of communication, and when sending messages even anonymously is possible, it is more tempting to engage in such behavior. When a social media policy states clear rules against the misuse of the platforms it helps to diminish harassment (WA17).

However, the policies seem to mainly serve the needs of the employer with the increased audience that the employees’ accounts give to the company. Meanwhile, the downsides that are analyzed here and later can cause serious harm to the employees, so an employee-central policy that is customized for the needs of an individual employee and emphasizes for example the distinction between work time and leisure time is more preferred. WA12 talks about this issue and states that “these

policies should be customized for each employer's unique culture, customs, and workforce demographics" in order to make the most of them.

Overall, the articles about the policies strongly recommend having a social media policy in order to benefit from the growing use of social media at the workplace despite the rules. This is seen beneficial to also the employees since they get a more positive morale for their time that would anyway be spent online (WA20), only now it is allowed and even encouraged and they can do something good for the company and community at the same time.

4.2 Monitoring policy and its direct impacts

The second category consists of articles that discuss scenarios where the employer chooses to use a surveillance policy to track their employees' social media use. These articles typically list the negative effects of personal social media at work including losing working time and efficiency and suggest monitoring them for the benefit of the employer at least as one of the possible solutions. Articles included in this category are WA5, WA11 and M4.

Table 3 Data for monitoring policies and their direct impact

Article	Personal social media at work		Having a monitoring policy	
	In favor	Against	In favor	Against
WA5	X			X
WA11		X	X	X
M4	-	-	X	X

From Table 3 it can be seen that the general attitude towards having employers monitor over employees' social media use at work is rather negative. Even the articles that discuss why surveillance would be a good thing conclude that the negative effects outweigh the positive ones, so it is quite clear that this type of policy is not preferred by either the employers or the employees.

However, it is an issue worth discussing since for example WA11 points out the following:

“There are more and more employers placing employee computer use under surveillance because the technology is becoming cheaper and cheaper. No matter how you feel about it, employers that don't monitor will become fewer and fewer, not to nail employees, but because monitoring increasingly makes business sense.”

Since employers, despite the negative general attitude, seem to continue implementing social media surveillance policies in the companies, the effects that this might have on employees and the workplace are important to acknowledge. Having a monitoring policy means that the employer can see what the employees are doing on the devices and on their social media accounts. Main reason to this is that the employers are concerned that their employees visit “game sites; social networking sites; entertainment sites; shopping/auction sites; and sports sites” (WA11). This would reduce the time spent on actual work and therefore harm the productivity of the employee.

Without monitoring, it is easy for employees to go, misbehave and harm the company online. “Sometimes that can bring workplace tensions and complaints, sometimes it can damage a company's reputation in the marketplace, and sometimes it can lead all the way to lawsuits or regulatory action” according to M4. Therefore, the same article states that in addition to having surveillance on the internal networks and public media, the employer should get access to employees' private social media too. “Strict monitoring allows employers to spot potential problems early, get the information offline as quickly as possible and discipline the employees involved” (M4).

However, despite the strong arguments made in the first half of M4, the phenomenon of social media monitoring seems to be shown in rather negative light. According to WA11, “monitoring of employee time and use online is a signal of distrust and incongruent with an employee-oriented culture that regards employees as the chief assets of the company”. This is a significant downside of the surveillance policy, and also WA5 agrees with this by also underlining that monitoring harms loyalty and trust

between the employer and the employees. “There is a vast difference between asking for employees to exercise good judgment and hovering over their Tweets like Big Brother,” WA5 states meaning that blindly monitoring is almost underrating the employees.

With precise monitoring of social media comes the problem of separating personal and professional opinions and profiles. “Experience shows that employers fire employees for reasons having nothing to do with work” according to M4, and that is a serious concern. The things that employees post on their private accounts might go against the employer’s values and result in termination of contract. According to WA5 his should not be allowed:

“Even if a company itself is neutral, the subjective feelings of the person tasked with monitoring employees’ social media could easily lead to discrimination, especially in the highly polarized environment of the U.S. People should be able to share their views on gay marriage, for example, with their friends on social media, without running afoul of an employer who disagrees with them.”

Given all the arguments, it would seem that continuous social media monitoring is beneficial to hardly anyone. The employer suffers because of lack of trust from the employees, the employees lack privacy even outside work, and the workplace can become tense and discriminative. “Monitor only when there is a solid reason to suspect employee wrongdoing” suggests M4 in order to avoid the negative effects but still be able to protect the company when harm could be done. That seems to be the way surveillance policies should go towards in order to create some benefits.

4.3 Bring your own devices (BYOD) policy and its direct impacts

The third category articles discuss a policy called Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD). These articles explain the benefit of having employees bring their own mobile devices and laptops, therefore also social media, to work with them. Articles WA9, WA19 and WA23 belong to this category.

Table 4 Data for BYOD policy and its direct impacts

Article	Personal social media at work		Having a BYOD policy	
	In favor	Against	In favor	Against
WA9	-	-	X	
WA19	X		X	
WA23	-	-	X	

Table 4 shows that only in one of the three articles had a direct mentioning of social media being beneficial at work regarding the BYOD policy. However, using personal devices without a doubt means that also personal social media is brought with the employee to work, so some new effects could be found when studying these two aspects together.

The idea behind BYOD policy is to allow employees to use their own devices, including laptops, tablets and phones, to do their work at the workplace and outside of it. The goal according to WA9 is to achieve “increased productivity and reduced costs”, latter of which is reached by not having to provide new equipment for every employee regularly. The increase in productivity is reached because “employees are happier, more comfortable and often work faster with their own technology” (WA9).

However, “with the proliferation of smartphones and media tablets enabling businesses and individual employees to work more productively and profitably, there also comes the risk that the same levels of sophistication can be undermined by fraudsters” reminds WA23. Therefore it is clear that the company has to somehow secure the devices their employees are using, which in this case are their personal

devices. It could come out as the company going too close to the employees' private life and is present even outside the workplace. One can never truly know what all kinds of things the systems downloaded on their own devices monitor. Also, having all work on personal devices makes it easier to keep doing work after hours at home, which can create stress and the feeling of not having free time at all.

There are, however, many positive sides of using personal devices. "These mobile devices are often newer and more advanced than the equipment deployed by many IT departments" according to WA9, so for example the quality of apps and the speed of the device make working nicer. WA9 also points out that "employees want to use the devices that they are comfortable with in the workplace" and that "they want to have the same experience at work that they have at home". This ought to lead into better work results, but having maybe too familiar atmosphere and devices could also lead to familiar habits that the employees have at home, which include for example browsing social media at the side of the actual work. WA19 suggests that those habits could be turned into part of the work:

"Considering the vast number of available ways to communicate today, mirroring a person's tech use outside the organization with internal systems is more productive for everyone. This approach doesn't require people to learn new systems or waste the organization's time or money in training."

According to the same article, even though many companies do not feel comfortable with "allowing people to toggle between work and personal social platforms", it could lead to better results through making the employees feel more attached to the work environment.

4.4 Banning social media and its direct impacts

The fourth category contains articles about forbidding employees to access personal social media at the workplace. These articles emphasize the negative effects of social media at work in general and discuss the benefits of banning it. This category consists of articles WA11, WA13-14, WA22, B2 and B4.

Table 5 Data for banning social media and its direct impacts

Article	Personal social media at work		Banning social media at work	
	In favor	Against	In favor	Against
WA13	X	X	X	
WA14	X			X
WA22		X	X	
B2	X			X
B4	X			X

From Table 5 it can be seen that the general attitude towards banning personal social media totally at work vary from positive to negative. However, most of the arguments in favor of banning social media were regarding only some sectors and fields of business, so in general the zero tolerance policy is not very popular.

“Tweeting inappropriate memes. Instagramming lunches. Facebooking a few office selfies. These are the events companies fear will flood their workplaces if they let employees use social media on the job” according to WA14. As written in B4, employers can also “fear that employees are exposed to inappropriate feedback, their time management weakens and that the amount of data security risks increases” (own translation). Those are common arguments in favor of banning social media completely from the workplace.

“There is a fairly widespread perception that Facebook and Twitter are used by employees to waste time in non-productive work, while LinkedIn is often used by employees to network so that they can find a better job” lists B2 as one of the reasons why employers are not brave enough to give up their banning policies. B4

agrees with this by pointing out that “using social media is still seen as ‘surfing on Facebook’ instead of doing real work”.

WA13 also points out that in certain sectors, like the financial industry, the employer prevents “employees from using sites like Facebook, Twitter and even web-based email like Gmail, citing potential threats as well as an interruption from work as their reasoning”. WA22 also discusses the use of social media by the staff in hospitals and schools and concludes that in these kinds of professions it is really important to keep personal social media apart from the work and the professional tasks.

But outside these industries and sectors, the attitude towards banning social media is not very positive. “Social media has spread rapidly and undergone massive changes. It now stands as a near-ubiquitous commodity; social media in the workplace is almost unavoidable” says WA14 and that seems to be the case in many of the articles. The same article encourages employers to “time and energy they spend on stopping employees from using social media in the workplace” because regardless of those efforts, the employees are most likely using it anyway. Therefore the consequences of banning social media to the employee are not that significant, unless they get caught on doing something the employer has told precisely not to do.

The consequences for the employer can be worse. “In November 2011, a survey of 2,800 college students and recently employed graduates showed that 56 per cent of respondents would refuse to work at a company that bans social media, according to Cisco” (WA13). That means that with the younger generations graduating into the work life, banning social media at work is probably going to become even rarer.

4.5 Other impacts of the increased use of personal social media at work

The fifth category collects people's thoughts together about the increased use of personal social media at work. Themes discussed are for example "technostress", bringing work home with you with your devices, lack of actual free time, difficulties in concentration due to constant interruptions and how social media has become a natural part of working. Articles in this category are WA15-16, CH1, M1-3 and C1-7.

Table 6 Data for other impacts of increased use of personal social media at work

Article	Personal social media at work		
	Positive effects/attitude	Neutral effects/attitude	Negative effects/attitude
WA15		X	X
WA16			X
CH1		X	X
M1		X	X
M2		X	X
M3	X		X
C1		X	X
C2		X	
C3		X	
C4	X		
C5	X		
C6			X

From Table 6 it can be analyzed that the data that discussed other impacts of the increased use of social media at work focused on rather negative aspects. None of the articles directly suggested that social media should not be allowed or encouraged at work, but they largely discuss topics that are negative consequences of that increased use.

The main three negative consequences found are technostress, the increased amount of external interruptions and decreasing amount of deep work. All these three relate to each other and social media: the increased amount of applications,

platforms and technological devices lead to technostress, which results in constant interruptions, which make deep and focused work really difficult.

“Technostress” as a term covers many problems and symptoms that have increased since the growth of technology and social media. WA16 list some of them, for example “screen insomnia, smartphone addiction, information overload” and many more. The core behind these problems is that people feel like they have to be online, available and reachable all the time and that stresses them (M2). According to WA15, “being ‘always on’, to use the relevant IT jargon, means you simply cannot switch off and relax”.

This “being always on” has several negative consequences. According to WA16, social media addiction harms “productivity, health and happiness”. WA15 adds to the list that “technostress and addiction undoubtedly have a negative impact on things like job satisfaction and work-life balance”. All of these are factors that should work as warnings signs for the employer, since it is without a doubt affecting the company’s productivity too.

However, the trend of having social media at work is an increasing one like the data for social media policies suggests. Technology and social media are developing and becoming bigger and bigger parts of people’s professional lives which means an increase also in the amount of people suffering from technostress. WA15 describes the nature of workplace technology and its development in the following way:

“Just to fan the flames, a lot of workers are also bombarded with seemingly constant changes and upgrades to the multifarious IT systems that they use every day, meaning that as soon as they get a handle on them, they are replaced with something new.”

When employees are forced to constantly learn to use new platforms and applications and work at the same time, stress is the end result. WA16 lists some of the potential future changes to be for example artificial intelligence and robotics and reminds that “as the changes accelerate, the harms of technostress will rise”.

In addition to the platform being changed into new ones quickly, the number of sites and channels in use is also increasing. According to WA16, employees' feelings of exhaustion at the end of a workday are "caused by the constant mental shifting from one communications medium to the next, and the anxiety and stress are caused by nonstop communication". This can also be seen in C6, where the writer in a bit of a frustrated way describes how they would be okay with email and phone but "when Skype and Slack are thrown into the pot, the screen is twinkling like my neighbors Christmas lights" (own translation).

This kind of reaction tells about the constant interruptions and distraction that social media at work brings with it. "People are constantly being bombarded with queries and information from endless different sources, whether it is emails, Twitter or direct messaging – and are expected to respond instantaneously" describes WA15. This kind of phenomenon interrupts the work continuously: M2 found out that an employee's workday was "interrupted 70 times due to email, phone or some other device beeping" (own translation). According to the same article, it takes "1-24 minutes to recover from one interruption, so approximately one third of the workday goes into this recovering" (own translation). That is a lot of time and tells well the severity of the problem.

The negative consequences of these constant interruptions are wide. "Due to interruptions, less time is left for thinking and focusing. Stress increases and the feeling of control decreases. In the worst-case scenario, job exhaustion waits at the end of this road" (own translation) according to M3. The same article lists how interruptions "increase the number of mistakes made and make the person feel the job as a bigger burden" (own translation).

However, in many jobs these interruptions are part of the work itself and thus unavoidable. The writer of C4 tells that they and many others work through email and mobile devices, so "if those interruptions didn't occur, I could just stop working at all" (own translation). C5 agrees and adds that seeing emails and notifications as harming interruptions "does not necessarily go well together with contemporary jobs in other companies" (own translation). The same comment points out that many jobs

nowadays require constant communication, so turning off devices to decrease the amount of interruptions is not really an option.

C3 offers an alternative point of view by saying how people should not open the email as the first thing in the morning at work. “At least in my job email and phone are tools, I was not hired to guard them the entire working time,” (own translation) the writer of the same comment explains. These opinions show that the topic can be very different regarding on which industry and sector people work on.

But regardless of the nature of the job, multiple communication channels and applications result in the employees multitasking throughout the workday (M2). M1 reminds that “people did many things at the same time even before social media” (own translation), but the rapid increase in the number of tasks due to social media and technology is still significant. C2 points out that “leading by email just adds the need for multitasking, besides the basic work you should all the time read your mail or the boss can answer to your question: ‘Haven’t you read your email, I already told it there’” (own translation). C6 also writes about multitasking and how they wish they “had time to do their own work instead of only helping colleagues, subcontractors and clients” (own translation).

These kinds of things increase the feeling of having to be constantly online. C1 complains how it is “impossible to concentrate at work because you HAVE TO answer the work phone and you HAVE TO open the email the minute you come to work, that is what I have been hired for” (own translation). The same writer tells how they are in “an alerted mode” (own translation) all the time at work and at home and how relaxing is impossible in the middle of the working week.

M1 also tells about how “habits transport from free time to the professional life and vice versa” (own translation), which means that the negatives, such as interruptions and lack of focus, of the workplace follow the employee home. M2 talks about the same phenomenon and that “the employers have been very interested in how the line between free and work time is thin: people read work emails to the late hours and in the morning its again the first thing they look at, even though no one forces

them to” (own translation). This could imply that people do not get enough done at work and have to take the tasks home with them.

One of the reasons to this could be the lack of deep work that the constant interruptions and multitasking result in. CH1 defines deep work as “the type of work that optimizes your performance”. It requires concentration and non-stop focus on a task at hand but is surprisingly rare in today’s working life. M1 introduces the term “attention deficit trait” which describes disturbance in attentiveness. According to the same article, the “symptoms appear due to lifestyle” (own translation). That would connect the lack of deep work and concentration into the hectic and interruption centered working life.

So, all in all, increasing the use of social media platforms and systems at work seems to create all sorts of stressful side effects. From technostress to multitasking and bringing work with you home, the same atmosphere of social media and technology being in control seems to come through. So instead of increasing the use in as many platforms as possible, maybe simply making social media a tool among the others could help resolve these issues.

4.6 Cultural differences in social media at work and the types of policies

In the data collected, hardly any directly culture related differences between social media use at work, its restriction policies and impact were found. One of the reasons to this could be the linguistically limited accessibility to different sources written in other languages, since people tend to write online in their own language about these kinds of things that require an opinion.

However, some of the articles addressed some certain countries' policies and social media use. For example, WA2 from the viewpoint of Latin America highlights that the use of social media at work is "an issue of growing importance" due to the recently started increase in the use of social media, which reflects that the policies are still in their early stages there. WA3 on the other hand talks about India and says that the employees there are the ones who use social media the most in the world but still "more than a quarter of Indian companies restrict external social networks". That tells about a contradiction between the needs and wants of the employees and the employers.

Given these implications of possible differences in the perceptions towards social media at work, the differences in smart phone usage across countries and the differences in management styles across nations, some cultural differences in the nature of social media policies might exist. Since there is no study on the issue nor data directly related to these cultural differences, based on the so far findings of this thesis and the national culture dimensions of Hofstede some hypothetical conclusions can be drawn.

In the following table (Table 7) cultural dimension scores of 11 countries are listed. These countries were chosen based on the fact that their management, smart phone usage or social media policies have been discussed in this thesis. The following part of this research is based on these scorings, what has been discovered about the countries and social media at the workplace in general.

Table 7 Hofstede country specific dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2010)

Country	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long Term Orientation	Indulgence
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53	78
France	68	71	43	86	63	48
Germany	35	67	66	65	83	40
The U.S.	40	91	62	46	26	68
Argentina	49	46	56	86	20	62
Japan	54	46	95	92	88	42
China	80	20	66	30	87	24
Bangladesh	80	20	55	60	47	20
India	77	48	56	40	51	26
United Arab Emirates	90	25	50	80	-	-
Ethiopia	70	20	65	55	-	-

From the table it can be seen that the pool of countries chosen includes high and low scores in each dimension, so the hypothetically drawn conclusions will match at least some of the countries chosen as examples.

The biggest downside of unrestricted use of social media at work is the threat that it opposes to the company. Employees can by accident or voluntarily post things online that should not be public or in other ways harm the employer online. Reasons behind implementing a social media policy are mainly in risk management. Therefore, it could be estimated that management in countries that score high in the uncertainty avoidance dimension would be in favor of having a rather strict social media policy or even ban social media completely in order to avoid possible risks that the use might cause. This would go well together with for example Japan, which scores very high in uncertainty avoidance, since the employment there was described to be life-long, and commitment to the company was expected. By having strict social media policies, the things that could harm the company and terminate the employment would be restricted and controlled.

Countries with high power distance accept the possible unequal distribution of power. This means hierarchical systems and clear separation of those who work in a higher position and those who work in the lower positions in an organization. Social media as a platform is all about bringing people together and especially at work it is a channel to help employees contact their managers easier and get more transparency to the organization. This does not seem to go quite well together with the idea of a clear hierarchy, so it could be seen that in high power distance countries social media at work is not seen as a very favorable thing or it would be at least very carefully allowed with precise policies. For example, in China, which ranks quite high in power distance, the restrictions on social media at work might be rather high, as are the restrictions nationwide given that Facebook for example is not accessible.

When it comes to individualism and collectivism, social media could be seen having pros and cons in both kinds of societies. With individualism and care for only the closest family, social media use at work gives the possibility to stay in contact with that family also when at work. However, when the same platforms, applications and even devices are used both at home and at work, it can disturb the home life and therefore the time spent with the closest ones. That is why in individualistic countries the policy that the employer chooses makes a difference: if there is a clear policy that states when and where employees' social media use is work-related and they should be reachable, the individualists can relax at home with their families. Gamification could also be a tactic used in individualistic countries, since reaching for personal good results through social media is something that would fit individualism. For example, in the United States, which ranks high in individualism and where the manager is expected to promote those who perform best, turning personal social media use at work into company and employee beneficial ranking system would also help the management to see who is performing well on that sector.

In collectivistic countries the situation is different. People there tend to work in groups and thrive towards the group's goal instead of their own benefit. In these kinds of countries social media as a uniting platform and communication channel would seem to work well in the work community. Social media allows people to ask help from each other and bond with co-workers even outside the working hours. In a collectivistic culture the social media policy chosen would probably be a bit more

guiding than very detailed, sharing social media platforms like Facebook with colleagues would probably be one of the ways the management would utilize these platforms in favor of the work community.

Long-term oriented countries are quickly to adapt into new innovations and change the norms to match the evolution of for example technology. Therefore, it could be estimated that countries that score high in this dimension would be very positive and open about social media entering the workplace. Social media continues to grow and seems to become more and more important in the workplace, so long-term oriented countries probably want to take advantage of this new sector and implement it into their business in an innovative way.

Short-term oriented countries would probably be the opposite. Having used to other kind of working norms, introduction of social media might seem as a scary or at least strange thing, so these countries might not be very open for it. Instead, banning social media at least in the beginning could maybe be something that these countries would do. An example would be India, which scores relatively low on the long-term orientation dimension, since as WA3 discussed, the employers have so far been skeptical about social media and have not allowed it even though the employees are starting to see the benefits of it. So, these countries might be at least a bit slower in starting to use personal social media at work.

Countries scoring high in the masculinity dimension value success and being the best at a field. Low score, femininity, people want to like what they do and have value for quality of life. In both kinds of societies social media at work can be beneficial. Masculine cultures want to thrive towards best possible results and social media can help in that through offering visibility online, new relationships and acknowledgement to the brand. Management in that kind of countries probably wants to know what is going on beneath them so that everyone is driving towards the same goal without harming the company on social media, and a detailed policy or monitoring can help in that. This again would work with for example Japan, which ranks as a very masculine culture, since managers there can set goals, even big ones, since people work in the same company preferably their entire lives and are very committed to their work. In order to be the best, management has to make sure everyone is doing their best.

In feminine countries, social media at work can make the work environment more relatable and cozy, which these kinds of cultures value. Having the familiar applications and platforms make working easier and nicer and therefore it could be figured that for example Bring Your Own Devices policies could be popular in these kinds of cultures. Social media at work could be allowed but with care, since the negative effects like technostress and weakened quality of work would decrease the quality of life.

The last dimension, indulgence, is an interesting one from the viewpoint of social media at work. Countries with high scores in indulgence are driven by impulses and desires. With social media, that could mean that people are likely to check the notifications their phone alerts about or scroll their feed if they simply feel like it. This would mean that the negative distracting nature of social media would be strong in indulgent culture. Therefore, management in these kinds of countries would probably try to control the use of social media with a clear policy, a monitoring policy or completely banning social media at work. However, whether these kinds of policies would work in an indulgent country is another question. Employees would most likely regardless of the policies use their personal social media at work, so management in indulgent countries are maybe facing a challenge with making the time employees spend online useful and beneficial.

The restrained cultures have the opposite problems. Their employees do not feel the urge to use social media just because a sudden impulse. On one hand it is good for the employers, since they do not have to worry about valuable working hours spent online for nothing. On the other hand, though, if the company wished to initiate a social media policy and get the employees to share their content and promote the brand online, they could face a problem with how to activate the employees. That is when for example gamification could work, since when the employees are given a goal regarding social media use, they would not be doing it for nothing but actually for something useful.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aimed to study the phenomenon of personal social media at the workplace. The areas focused on were the way employers have tried to control or encourage this use, what have been the impacts of increased use of social media at work and what are the cultural differences that might occur in these areas.

Both good and bad consequences of using social media at work were found in the literature review, so studying the impacts of the increased trend of the use is important in order to know whether the good outweigh the bad. Cultural differences in management and the amount of smart phone owners per country were also studied which lead to the question about possible cultural differences in the social media policies and their impacts.

To analyze these questions a qualitative research was conducted by collecting data in the form of different types of articles on the internet. A total of 40 articles were researched and analyzed through categorizing them to four categories based on the type of social media policy they discussed and an additional category for other consequences of increased use of social media use at work. A sixth category consisted of hypothetically drawn conclusions on possible cultural differences based on the findings of the literature review, the data and Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

5.1 Main Findings

The main findings are reviewed here as the answers to the research questions.

1. How have employers tried to control or encourage the use of personal social media at work?

Four different kind of way of controlling or encouraging the use of social media at work were found. Firstly, employers have initiated social media policies that encourage the use of social media at work and benefit both the employer and the employees. Secondly, some employers monitor their employees' use of social media

through having surveillance on their screens and social media accounts so that nothing that could harm the company is posted there. Thirdly, some companies have started to use “Bring your own devices” policy, which means that employees get to do their work on their own devices and therefore in addition have an easy access to also their own social media sites. The fourth identified policy is banning social media use at work completely and not allowing its personal use during working hours.

2. What have been the effects of these policies and their consequences on employees, the employer and the workplace?

The policies that try to prevent the use of social media at work seem to have not been working and therefore not having the wanted impacts. The policies that encourage the use of social media at work have had positive impacts on the company in form of more visibility to the company and the brand online through employees’ personal profiles, and also a better communication channel for internal purposes. Increased employee engagement and productivity were also a positive consequence of encouraging social media use. The biggest benefit to the employer, however, is that with a clear policy of social media they can control and restrict the possible leakages of confidential information through social media platforms.

For employees, social media at work improves workplace atmosphere through making the co-workers closer to each other. Familiar applications and platforms increase the productivity and make working more enjoyable. Social media also increases the width of professional networks created. However, the increased use can also lead to technostress because new platforms and applications are introduced on a fast phase and keeping up with the latest ones can be stressful. Devices also create constant interruptions and distraction which harm people’s ability to concentrate on doing deep work and can reflect as stress and burnouts.

3. Are there cultural differences in the findings of research questions 1 and 2?

No direct cultural differences were found from the data, apart from some geographical areas being introduced to the scene of social media at the workplace a bit later than some others due to slower growing economy. However, given these

small differences, the cultural differences in management and management perceptions and country differences in the number of smart phones owned, some hypothetical conclusions were drawn using Hofstede's cultural dimensions. According to these conclusions, high uncertainty avoidance, short-term oriented, indulgent, high power distance and masculine countries prefer strict social media policies or possibly, in the case of the first two, complete banning. Feminine cultures would prefer a Bring Your Own Devices policy, as well as a positive attitude towards social media. Management in collectivistic and long-term oriented countries encourage their employees to use social media, as well as individualistic and restrained countries which in addition could benefit from using gamification when trying to get the employees engaged in social media.

Now the research questions have been answered and it can be concluded that the effects of social media at the workplace are controversial. Regarding the ways of approaching the phenomenon, beneficial policies are clearly the rising trend and with that, social media continues to enter to new workplaces. With the increased use, problems such as technostress and people merging personal and professional lives grow which means that the risk for burnout and exhaustion grows. And since social media does not show any signs of slowing down, the risk is increasing even more.

However, social media does have a lot of potential and good effects too, so it would be important to find a way to minimize the negativities and maximize the benefits. Even though most of the negative effects affect the employees, it would also be beneficial to the employer to solve these issues on time. The lack of productivity and performance due to stress and burnout can be costly to the company, so ensuring employees' wellbeing is crucial in order to be a successful organization.

Regarding the cultural differences, it can be concluded that the findings rely on hypothetical conclusions. They do, however, raise many points about the possibility of these differences existing with literature and Hofstede as the base, so there could be room for more research with more data.

5.2 Practical implications for companies

Social media is a current topic with constant development, so banning it from the workplace is no longer an option. Instead, companies all around the world should try to develop a beneficial policy that makes the employees' personal social media use allowed through either promoting the company and its brand online or having an internal communication system based on those platforms.

While the possibilities social media holds seem good for the organization, there are several downsides that could cause harm to the employees. These problems, such as technostress, are also issues for the company since it decreases productivity and quality of work. Therefore, companies should always think about the employee when new platforms or systems are discussed to be installed and not for example blindly change from system to system just for the sake of having the newest one. Employees are the employer's most important asset so it should be remembered that social media is supposed to help them do their job instead of them being guided and pushed around by the technology.

5.3 Limitations

This research has multiple limitations due to the wide concept of social media. First of all, the data studied is very limited and does not cover everything there is to find out about the topic. People do not write everything they have on their mind on the internet where the data was collected. People also tend to write more likely about the negative aspects online instead of the positive, so the data might lean towards the negative effects because of that. Collecting data about social media through internet also ignores the opinions of those who do not use social media or internet at all, which could be a significant amount of those who have something to say about the matter.

As identified in the analysis too, the use of social media at the workplace is very much different depending on what industry or sector is being examined. Therefore, drawing general conclusions is difficult and not very precise. The cultural differences

and the conclusions drawn are also not very precise, since there were not previous studies or data for that matter to support them. Hofstede is also a very one-sided viewpoint on culture and does not necessarily nowadays hold true anymore.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

There are many directions for future research to continue from the findings of this thesis. First of all, which social media policies are used in which industries and sectors is something that could lead into more concrete findings about the impacts of these policies. Also, more research on employee viewpoints on the increased use of social media at work could lead into interesting results, as so far most of the articles were written from the employer's point of view.

The consequences that increased use of social media has are also a good field for further research. Especially technostress as a phenomenon is something that could be studied from many viewpoints. Examples could be what are the concrete ways that it could be prevented, how common it truly is and who are those who suffer from it the most; the older generations or the younger ones too?

Lastly, there is a big gap in the research for the cultural differences. More research could be done industry specifically between different countries and cultures, as well as the general attitudes and trends that social media faces in different locations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Data

(B1) Blogpost 1	<i>Weidert Group Marketing & Sales Blog</i> : Why Your Company Should Encourage Employees to Use Social Media at Work
(B2) Blogpost 2	<i>Micro Focus Blog</i> : Social Media in the Workplace: Benefits and Growth
(B3) Blogpost 3	<i>The Social Intel Blog</i> : How to Create a Social Media Policy That Saves You Time, Money, and Headaches
(B4) Blogpost 4	<i>TTT Blog</i> : Sosiaalinen media tuli töihin (Social media came to work)
(B5) Blogpost 5	<i>HRCLOUD blog</i> : The Benefits of Social Media Networking at Work
(C1) Comment 1	Comment by username: Sham Rissanen, V. (6 December 2017) 'Aivotutkija: Keskeytysten kulttuuri tekee meistä tyhmiä – "Ei tarvitse elää ilman kannettavia laitteita, mutta ryhtiliike olisi paikallaan"' (A brain scientist: The culture of interruptions makes us stupid – "People don't need to live without portable equipment, but getting a grip would do good"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(C2) Comment 2	Comment by username: returnee Rissanen, V. (6 December 2017) 'Aivotutkija: Keskeytysten kulttuuri tekee meistä tyhmiä – "Ei tarvitse elää ilman kannettavia laitteita, mutta ryhtiliike olisi paikallaan"' (A brain scientist: The culture of interruptions makes us stupid – "People don't need to live without portable equipment, but getting a grip would do good"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(C3) Comment 3	Comment by username: Kahar Rissanen, V. (6 December 2017) 'Aivotutkija: Keskeytysten kulttuuri tekee meistä tyhmiä – "Ei tarvitse elää ilman kannettavia laitteita, mutta ryhtiliike olisi paikallaan"' (A brain scientist: The culture of interruptions makes us stupid – "People don't need to live without portable equipment, but getting a grip would do good"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(C4) Comment 4	Comment by username Euroopasta Mansikka, O. (28 February 2018) 'Toimittaja testasi, kuinka monta kertaa työpäivä keskeytyi sähköposteihin ja pikaviesteihin – Aivotutkija tuloksista: "Auts"' (Reporter tested how many times their workday was interrupted by emails and messages – Brain scientist about the results: "Ouch"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(C5) Comment 5	Comment by username: By the book Mansikka, O. (28 February 2018) 'Toimittaja testasi, kuinka monta kertaa työpäivä keskeytyi sähköposteihin ja pikaviesteihin – Aivotutkija tuloksista: "Auts"' (Reporter tested how many times their workday was interrupted by emails and messages – Brain scientist about the results: "Ouch"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(C6) Comment 6	Comment by username: gd90t950tfg Mansikka, O. (28 February 2018) 'Toimittaja testasi, kuinka monta kertaa työpäivä keskeytyi sähköposteihin ja pikaviesteihin – Aivotutkija tuloksista: "Auts"' (Reporter tested how many times their workday was interrupted by emails and messages – Brain scientist about the results: "Ouch"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(CH1) Chat thread 1	https://www.reddit.com/r/productivity/comments/68w8ii/the_importance_of_deep_work_in_todays_social/
(LIA1) LinkedIn article 1	Aliyev, I. (2018) 'Social Network Risk Management.' LinkedIn

	Post, 9 March 2018.
(M1) Magazine article 1	Rissanen, V. (6 December 2017) 'Aivotutkija: Keskeytysten kulttuuri tekee meistä tyhmiä – "Ei tarvitse elää ilman kannettavia laitteita, mutta ryhtiliike olisi paikallaan"' (A brain scientist: The culture of interruptions makes us stupid – "People don't need to live without portable equipment, but getting a grip would do good"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(M2) Magazine article 2	Mansikka, O. (12 February 2018) 'Työpäivä katkeaa 70 kertaa "härvelin piippaukseen", kotona ei uni tule – Teknostressi häiritsee elämäämme, sanoo tutkija, mutta näin päihität sen' (Workday is interrupted 70 times due to a "gadget beeping", at home you can't sleep – Technostress disturbs our lives but here is how you defeat it). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(M3) Magazine article 3	Mansikka, O. (28 February 2018) 'Toimittaja testasi, kuinka monta kertaa työpäivä keskeytyi sähköposteihin ja pikaviesteihin – Aivotutkija tuloksista: "Auts"' (Reporter tested how many times their workday was interrupted by emails and messages – Brain scientist about the results: "Ouch"). [Online] <i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> .
(M4) Magazine article 4	Weber, J. (22 October 2014) 'Should Companies Monitor Their Employees' Social media?' [Online] <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> .
(WA1) Website article 1	https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/280251
(WA2) Website article 2	https://www.globalhrlaw.com/resources/social-media-and-the-workplace-in-latin-america
(WA3) Website article 3	https://www.siliconindia.com/news/technology/Indian-Employees-Are-The-Highest-Users-Of-Social-Media-At-Work-Microsoft-nid-148077-cid-2.html
(WA4) Website article 4	http://hongkongbusiness.hk/media-marketing/commentary/implementing-social-media-policies-in-hong-kongs-workplace
(WA5) Website article 5	http://time.com/3894276/social-media-monitoring-work/
(WA6) Website article 6	https://www.careeradict.com/negative-effects-of-social-media-in-the-workplace
(WA7) Website article 7	http://bigthink.com/philip-perry/is-social-media-killing-your-workplaces-productivity
(WA8) Website article 8	https://www.businesstoday.in/current/corporate/social-media-affecting-workplace-productivity-report/story/238716.html
(WA9) Website article 9	https://www.techradar.com/news/computing/what-is-byod-and-why-is-it-important-1175088
(WA10) Website article 10	https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryanwestwood/2015/03/05/hit-like-if-you-agree-with-social-media-in-the-workplace/#7c710169341b
(WA11) Website article 11	https://www.thebalance.com/surfing-the-web-at-work-1919261
(WA12) Website article 12	https://maximizesocialbusiness.com/top-reasons-employees-use-social-media-at-work-23380/
(WA13) Website article 13	http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/01/05/social-media-at-work_n_1183507.html
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